

American Profile



The winners of the
Hometown Holidays
recipe contest

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INSIDE:

- Eric Ligon creates books for the blind
- Patrick Acton makes matchstick marvels
- Sweet potato soup

Ask American Profile

Q What can you tell me about Camille Guaty on *Las Vegas*? She looks familiar, but I can't place her.

—T. Thomas, Ketchum, Idaho

California-born Guaty, 29, who plays feisty casino concierge Piper Nielsen on the NBC-TV series *Las Vegas*, got her start as a contestant on the WB network's singing competition *Popstars: USA*. She didn't win, but the show opened the door for her first acting role in the 2000 movie *Chaos Theory*. She also appeared in the 2002 Disney Channel movie *Gotta Kick It Up!* before landing her first series role in the WB's *Raising Dad*, followed by *Crossing Jordan*, *Prison Break* and *The Nine*.

Actress Camille Guaty



Musical brothers Johnny (left) and Donnie Van Zant



Q I'm a big Lynyrd Skynyrd fan. What are the two tattoos and words on singer Johnny Van Zant's arms?

—Lorrie Lang, Eatonton, Ga.

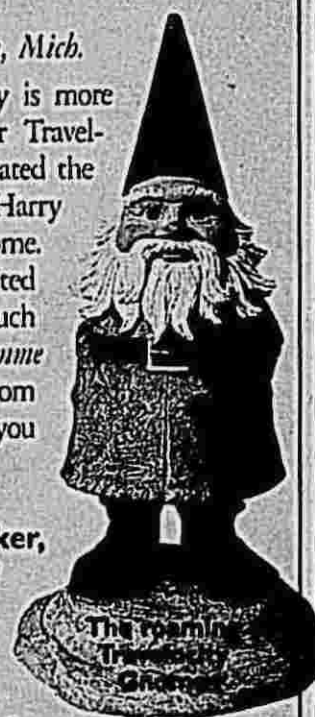
The right arm of Van Zant, the younger brother of the band's original singer, the late Ronnie Van Zant, sports a tattoo of a bird-like angel with "Van Zant" written overhead, and the initials of his four daughters' first names—Lindsay, Kristen, Harmony and Taylor—underneath. The tattoo on his left arm is a cross with the words "He Lives" written on a wrap-around banner. Johnny and his other brother, Donnie, recently released their second country music CD collaboration, *My Kind Of Country*.



Q Who does the voice for the Traveling Gnome on the Travelocity commercials? We remember that GEICO wanted to keep the voice for their gecko a secret.

—Larry and Billie Taylor, Mancelona, Mich.

Happily, the ad agency for Travelocity is more forthcoming about the voice of their Traveling Gnome than are the folks who created the GEICO Gecko, so we can tell you that Harry Enfield provides the voice of the gnome. Enfield, 46, is a comedian in the United Kingdom well known for BBC shows such as *Harry Enfield's Television Programme* and *Harry Enfield and Chums*, clips from which can be seen on www.youtube.com if you are curious and have Internet access.



Q How tall were Fess Parker, Clint Walker and James Arness?

—Earl Patterson, Fredonia, Pa.

All three men are among television's towering actors. Parker (*Daniel Boone*) stood 6 feet 5 inches, Walker (*Cheyenne*) 6 feet 6 inches and Arness 6 feet 7 inches. Arness was so tall, in fact, that his *Gunslinger* co-stars often had to stand on platforms—or he had to stand in a low spot—for scenes in which they appeared next to him.

Q I'm convinced I saw actress Heather Graham in TV's *Growing Pains* back in the '80s. Am I right?

—Kaye Elliott, Boone, N.C.

You've got a good memory! Graham, who'll turn 37 in January, was 17 when she appeared in two episodes of *Growing Pains* in 1987. The Milwaukee native has brightened the screen in numerous movies since then, most notably *Swingers*, *Boogie Nights*, *Lost in Space*, *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* and last year's *Broken*, just released on DVD, in which she plays a waifish Midwestern singer-songwriter who falls into trouble in Hollywood. She also has hosted *Saturday Night Live*, played herself in *Sex and the City* and guest-starred in several episodes of TV's *Scrubs*.



Heather Graham stars alongside Jeremy Sisto in *Broken*.

* Cover photo by High Cotton Food Styling & Photography

■ Would you like to know more about your favorite celebrity or public figure?

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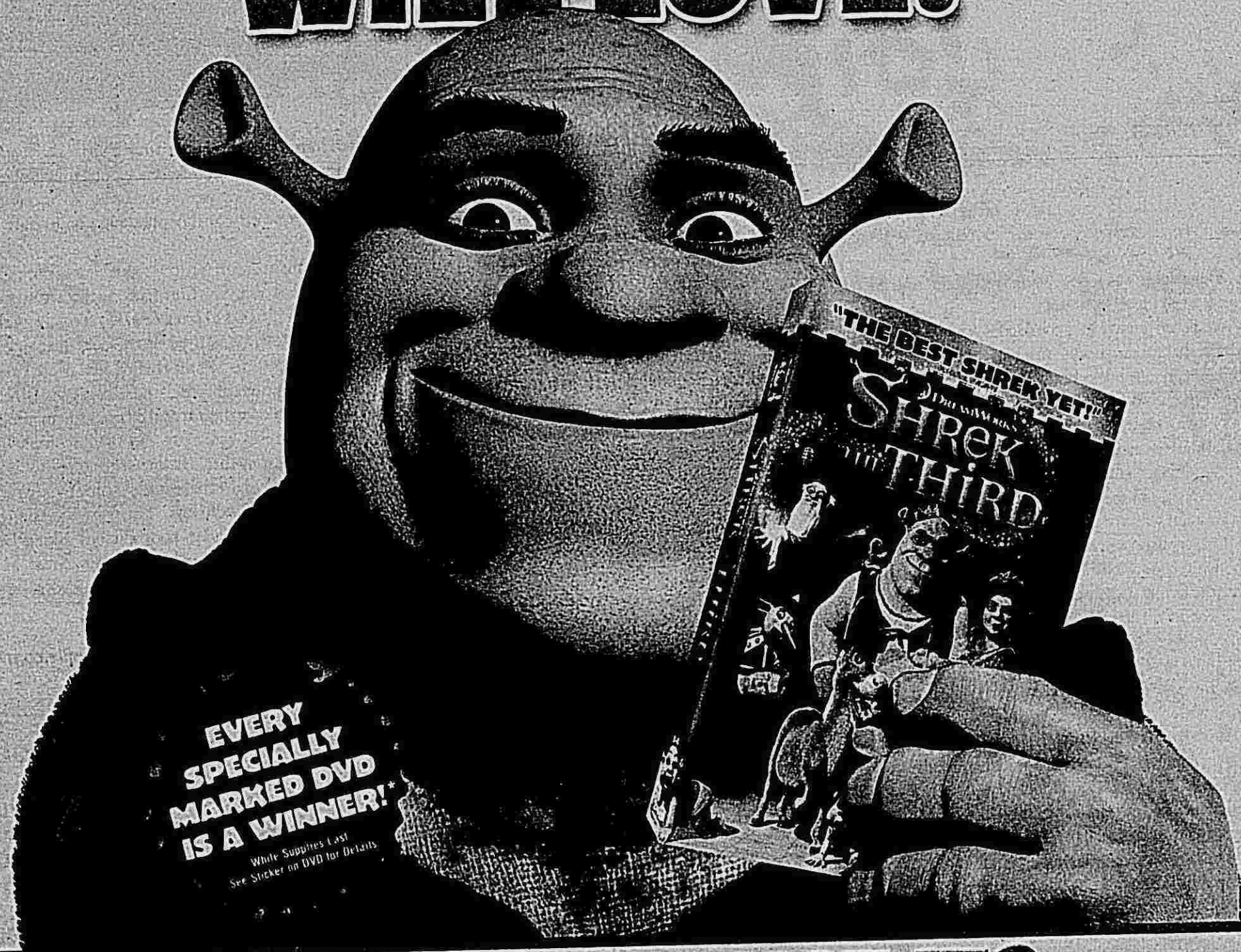
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Hometown Hero

by
KRISTEN
TRIBE

Photos by Ed Lallo

A Feel for Reading

When Eric and Leslie Ligon learned in 1997 that their 2-month-old son, Ethan, was blind, they were devastated.

"It was a shock," says Eric, 47, of Denton, Texas. "We had no previous experience with blindness and we thought he would be helpless."

Their shock was soon replaced with a determination to create a full life for their son.

As Ethan grew older, the Ligon family was excited by the idea of sharing storybooks with him, but found traditional children's Braille books nearly impossible for a sighted and blind reader to enjoy together. Some were Braille-only books with no corresponding words in print, while others had Braille printed on plastic pages that either adhered to the original pages, sometimes covering the text and illustrations, or were bound in separately where the Braille didn't align with the printed words.

Eric, an associate professor of communication design at the University of North Texas in Denton, was convinced that the format could be improved.

"For Ethan to share books with siblings and friends (like his 8-year-old brother, Spencer), the original illustrations and text needed to remain intact," Ligon says. "I basically took the list of problems, and thought, 'How am I going to solve these?'"

With the publishers' permission, Ligon redesigned well-known children's books so that print and Braille readers could enjoy the same book. The new design included the original text and illustration at the top of each page, and Braille at the bottom with the corresponding print also directly above. This prevented the Braille reader's hands from blocking what the sighted reader needs to see, and it enabled a sighted reader to learn Braille basics. Each book also had a Braille glossary in the back for the alphabet, numbers and punctuation.

In 2003, Ligon presented his ideas at a literacy conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, and grabbed the attention of attendee Bruce

Curtis, who at the time coordinated reading materials for the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. Curtis recalls that Ligon's presentation was "the talk of the conference."

"While working at Perkins I was floored by the magnitude of need for materials for families with blind or visually impaired children," Curtis says. "Eric's design is such a tremendous improvement on the formats in the past."

Following eight months of discussion and planning, Curtis moved to Texas to partner with Ligon, and in 2004, the pair founded BrailleInk, a nonprofit organization, to publish and sell the books.

In 2005, BrailleInk released *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney, and *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds. The books, which are sold online and at conferences, cost around \$20 each, just a few dollars more than the original book.

Lauren Gandhi, of Winston-Salem, N.C., bought both books for her blind 6-year-old son, Drew. She says they are anxiously awaiting the next titles.

"Teaching our kids to read and like books was important to us, and there was a gap there with Drew," Gandhi says. "These books have been helpful to show the importance of literacy and the idea that there's something on the page he can feel

that corresponds with what I'm reading."

BrailleInk plans to release a bilingual English/Spanish alphabet book early next year, and has two other titles in production, with a goal of publishing up to eight titles a year.

"Our main dream is to do lots and lots of books, but the bottleneck is cash," says Curtis, noting that it costs between \$4,000 and \$6,000 to produce 1,000 copies of a title.

Ethan, now 10, is a talented pianist and singer, and although he's surpassed the reading level of the BrailleInk books, he occasionally reads them with his father. And Ligon is thrilled to hear that the books Ethan inspired are enabling families with print and Braille readers, like the Gandhis, to easily share children's literature.

"These books have made reading time more pleasurable for both of us," Gandhi says. "I don't have to be so protective of the book, and I'm not constantly asking Drew to move his hand. He knows his sister loves to read, and now he has a better appreciation for what she enjoys." ★

Kristen Tribe is a writer from Decatur, Texas.

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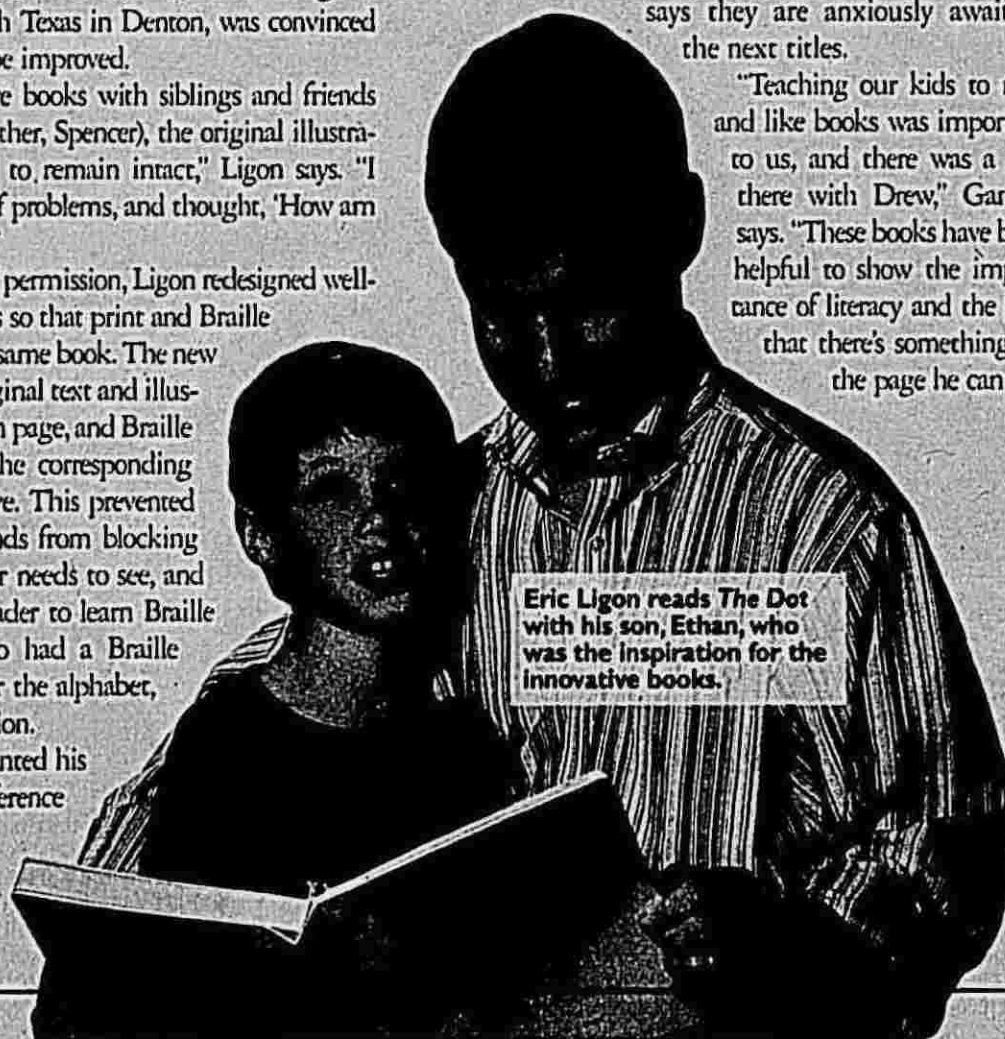
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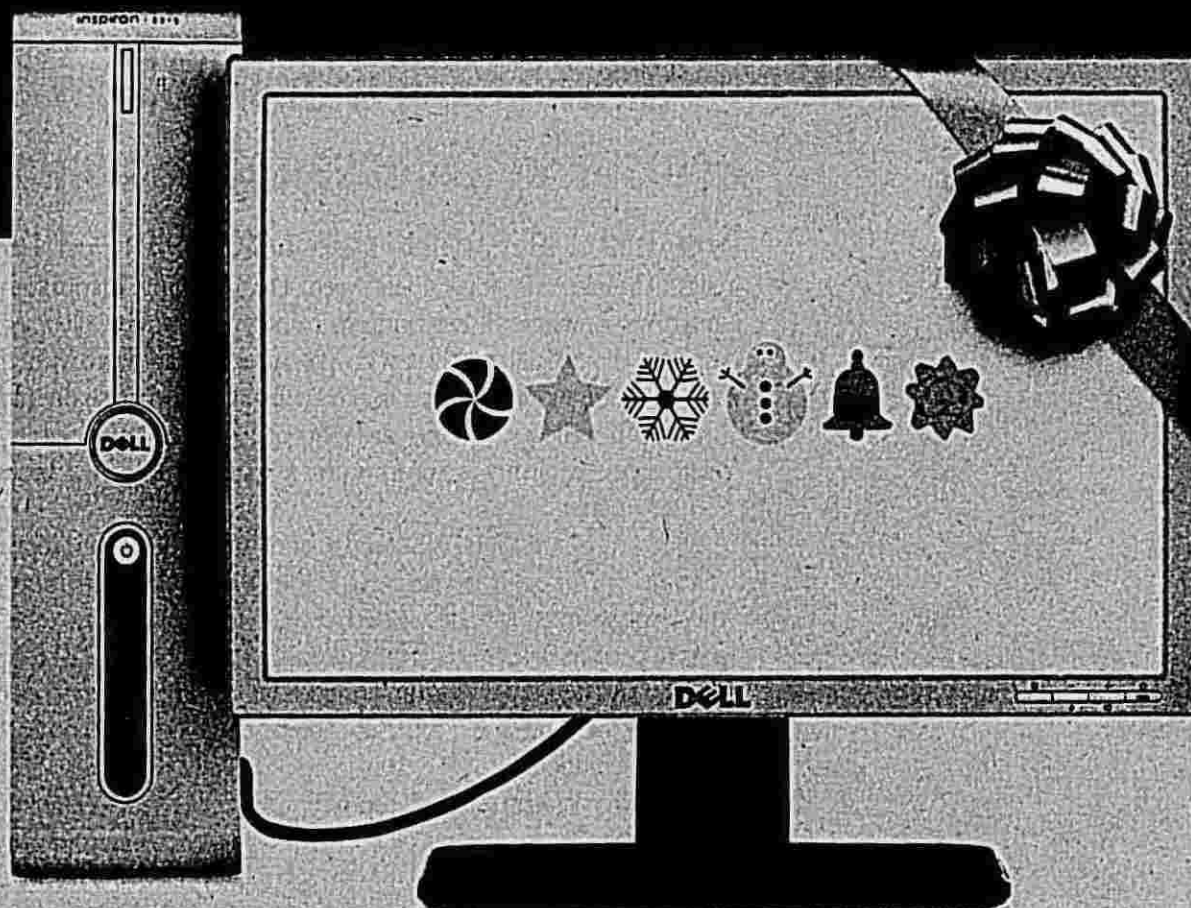
Eric Ligon reads *The Dot* with his son, Ethan, who was the inspiration for the innovative books.



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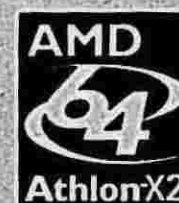
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Home for the Holidays

by CANDACE FLOYD
Food Editor

Announcing winners of the Hometown Holidays recipe contest

No matter what the occasion—New Year's Day, Easter, Passover, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah or Christmas—favorite dishes bring to mind memories of celebrations past and the special relatives who prepared holiday fare. Whether the recipes are written on a scrap of paper in Grandma's shaky hand, inked on a well-worn recipe card or typed on a computer, they all help define a family, a community, a region—and in a broader sense, a nation.

American Profile is pleased to announce the publication of *Hometown Recipes for the Holidays*. Published by William Morrow, the book brings together prized choices for the holiday table—from appetizers to desserts and breakfast to dinner. The 250 recipes included in the book were drawn from nearly 1,500 entries in our holiday recipe contest and represent the best of America's hometown holiday celebrations.

Here, we present some of the winning recipes, perfect for your holiday table.
(Continued on page 8)

Cranberry Cake with Hot Butter Sauce

- Cake:**
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 3 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 3 tablespoons butter, melted
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 2 eggs, beaten
 - 1 cup milk
 - 2 cups fresh cranberries

- Sauce:**
- 1 cup butter
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 1 cup cream or half-and-half
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Grease a 13-by-9-inch glass baking pan.



Phyllis Willink
Baldwin, Wis.

2. To make the cake, sift together flour, baking powder and salt in a small bowl. Combine butter and sugar in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add eggs. Add milk alternately with the dry ingredients, starting and ending with dry ingredients. Mix well. Stir in cranberries. Transfer to baking pan. Bake 30 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

3. To make the sauce, combine all ingredients in saucepan over medium-low heat and cook 10 minutes or until sugar is melted, stirring frequently. Pour hot sauce over cake. Serves 12.

Tips From Our Test Kitchen: This recipe can be used any time of the year by substituting blueberries, blackberries or raspberries in place of the cranberries.

Smoky Salmon Spread

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon liquid smoke
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 (16-ounce) can salmon, drained, bones removed and flaked
- 1/2 cup chopped toasted pecans
- 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
- Assorted crackers

1. Place cream cheese in a medium bowl. Beat until fluffy, using a mixer at medium speed.
2. Add onion, horseradish, lemon juice, liquid smoke and salt; beat until well blended. Stir in salmon.
3. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour to firm slightly. Place in a serving bowl and sprinkle pecans and parsley on top. Serve with crackers. Serves 8 to 10.



Gwen Swanson
Pukwana, S.D.

**Appetizer
WINNER**



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(Continued from page 6)



**Breakfast
WINNER**

Apricot- and Blueberry-Stuffed French Toast

- 1 cup sliced fresh or canned apricots
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed and drained on paper towels
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
- 1/2 cup apricot preserves
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 12 slices thick white bread
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, divided
- 1/4 cup vanilla yogurt, optional

1. Preheat oven to 300F.
2. Combine apricots, blueberries and sugar in a small bowl. Combine

cream cheese and preserves in a medium microwave-safe bowl and heat on high for 30 to 40 seconds to soften cream cheese and slightly melt preserves. Whisk until well blended.

3. Whisk eggs until well blended. Add half-and-half, honey and vanilla; mix well. Spread cream cheese mixture evenly over half the bread slices and top with remaining slices. Dip each into egg mixture, turning to coat well.

4. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook half the sandwiches until golden, about 2 minutes per side. Place on an ovenproof platter and keep warm in the oven. Repeat with remaining butter and sandwiches. Top each serving with fruit and yogurt, if using. Serves 6.



Trisha Kruse
Eagle, Idaho

Pan-Seared Pork Tenderloin with Apples and Onions

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 (2-pound) whole pork tenderloins
- 1 tablespoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 cup peanut oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup apple juice or apple cider
- 2 teaspoons orange marmalade, or 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar, plus 1/4 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 large tart apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled and chopped (about 1 pound total)
- 2 large red onions, peeled and chopped (about 3 cups)

1. Preheat oven to 425F.
2. Place flour in a shallow pan and coat pork evenly. Shake off excess and sprinkle seasoned salt evenly over pork.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add pork and cook until richly browned. Place in a 13-by-9-inch baking pan and bake 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 325F and cook 22 to 25 minutes, until internal temperature reaches 165F on a meat thermometer.



Michaela Rosenthal
Woodland Hills, Calif.



**Main Dish
WINNER**

4. Combine butter and olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When butter is melted, add brown sugar, lemon zest and juice, apple juice, marmalade and nutmeg; mix well. Add apples and onions; reduce heat to medium, and cook until apples are tender and onions begin to turn brown, 20 to 25 minutes, stirring frequently.

5. Remove cooked tenderloins to a cutting board and let stand 10 minutes before slicing into 1/2-inch slices. Tent with a sheet of foil to keep warm, if desired.

6. To serve, place sliced pork onto a heated platter and spoon apples and onions down the side. Serves 8.



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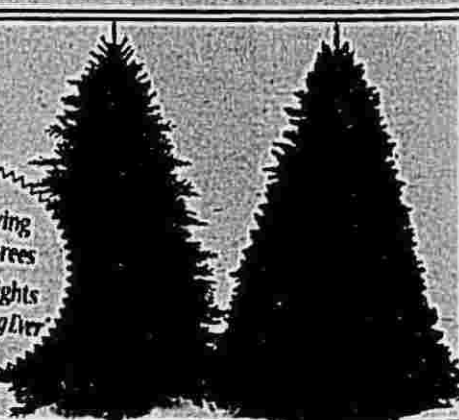
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GRAND PRIZE WINNER: Cranberry
Cake with Hot Butter Sauce—Phyllis
Willink, Baldwin, Wis.

Breakfast Winner: Apricot-Blueberry
Stuffed French Toast—Trisha Kruse,
Eagle, Idaho

Appetizer Winner: Smoky Salmon
Spread—Gwen Swanson, Pukwana, S.D.

Salad Winner: Summertime Bean and
Corn Salad—Doris Ann Rose, Eddy, Texas
(featured in the July 29, 2007, issue of
American Profile)

Bread Winner: Garlic Parmesan Rolls—
Loyd Patton, Spokane, Wash. (coming in next
week's issue of *American Profile*)

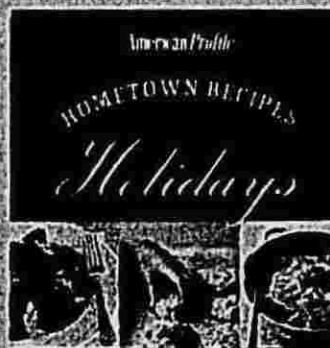
Sides Winner: Autumn Rum-Glazed
Carrots—Mary J. Lewis, Eatonton, Ga. (fea-
tured in last week's issue of *American Profile*)

Main Dish Winner: Pan-Seared Pork
Tenderloin with Apples and Onions—
Michaela Rosenthal, Woodland Hills, Calif.

Dessert Winner: Ooey-Gooey Caram-
el Turtle Cake—Laura Frerich, Napo-
leon, Ohio (coming in a future issue of
American Profile) ☆

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30 MG - 20 softgels

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#A0342T
REG. \$4.95 **\$1.29**

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American Artisan

by MELODY WARNICK

Photos by Dan Nierling

Patrick Acton's intricately detailed replicas of famous buildings and other creations are made of tipless wooden match-sticks.

Making Matchstick Marvels

From its tiny mullioned windows to its gargoyle-festooned towers, woodworker Patrick Acton's model of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the boarding-house home of Hollywood's favorite teenage wizard, Harry Potter, is an amazingly detailed replica. The real magic, though, is that it's made entirely of matchsticks—602,000 of them.

Hogwarts may be the most grandiose project undertaken yet by this Michelangelo of matchsticks, but playing with matches is a 30-year hobby for Acton. In 1977, he built his first matchstick model, a high-steeple church, at his kitchen table in Gladbrook, Iowa (pop. 1,015). Back then, his only aim was to while away the icy Midwestern winter.

"But it slowly became a passion," he says.

Since then, Acton, 53, has used little more than tipless wooden matches, sandpaper and gallons of carpenter's glue to piece together 60 models of buildings, ships, animals and people. Among his collection: Pinocchio, the USS *Iowa* battleship and a 200,000-stick *Challenger* space shuttle. Yet for years, few people outside his family even knew about Acton's quirky talent.

That changed in 1993, when 15 of his sculptures were snapped up for exhibit by Ripley's Believe It or Not! museums. The draw, explains Edward



Grownups and kids alike are spellbound by Acton's re-creation of Hogwarts, the boarding-house home of boy wizard Harry Potter in five Hollywood films.

Meyer, vice president of Ripley's exhibits and archives, is how Acton's matchstick models turn something so commonplace into things of beauty.

"I don't think I'm exaggerating to say Pat is the best we've ever seen," Meyer says.

The grandson of an expert stoneworker, whose artistic instinct he seems to have inherited, Acton says he was "the kind of kid who tore everything apart because I wanted to see how it worked."

Acton builds in pieces rather than from the ground up. "My son suggested that I paint the first matchstick in a model red so I could point it out to people," he says.

Selling some of his models to Ripley's was a boon for Acton, who continues to work full-time as a college career counselor in Iowa Falls (pop. 5,193) and Marshalltown, Iowa (pop. 26,009). Yet, because each model represented so much time and energy, it felt like a loss. "I decided I wanted to keep most of the stuff I'd made here in Iowa," he says. "But I was raising three kids and didn't really have the money to invest in a building to display the models permanently."

In 2000, the farming community of Gladbrook came to the rescue. With donated funds, grant money and volunteer labor, the town built a brand-new edifice on main street to house not only a museum for Acton's work, but also a city hall and the town's first movie theater. To seal the deal, Acton gave five of his biggest and best creations to the town, no strings attached.

Since opening day in 2003, the Matchstick Marvels

See More Online!

To learn more and see more photos, click on this story at americanprofile.com



Steady hands—and carpenter's glue—are integral to every model, such as this dinosaur.

museum has attracted a steady stream of visitors to Gladbrook, including tour buses from Chicago and Branson, Mo. But the museum/theater complex also has become a hot spot for locals. "It used to be that at 5 or 6 o'clock at night, you could shoot a cannon off on Main Street and not hit anything," says Mark Fink, 35, the town's former mayor. "Now there are a lot of cars uptown."

Whether they come from near or far, visitors to the museum are always wide-eyed at the matchstick masterpieces, lingering over favorites such as a curvaceous Brontosaurus dinosaur.

Acton's Hogwarts model, one of the few creations he has agreed to part with since the museum opened, recently was sold to a folk art museum in Spain for a sizeable sum.

"They wanted it more than I did," Acton says.

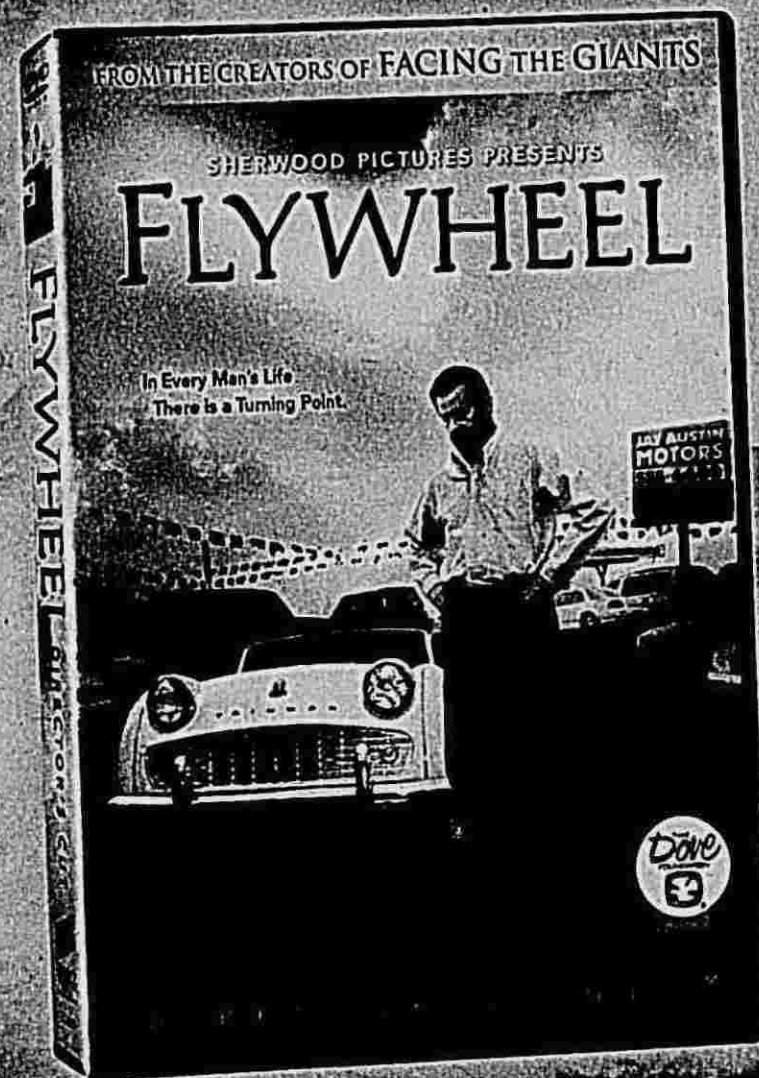
Never fear: He's already mulling the possibilities of building a *Star Wars* four-legged AT-AT combat "walker" or the Cathedral of Notre Dame. No matter what he creates, it's bound to be a masterful matchstick marvel. ☆

Melody Warmick is a writer based in Ames, Iowa.



Museum visitors Harry Thoms and Robert Griffin admire Acton's Apache helicopter.

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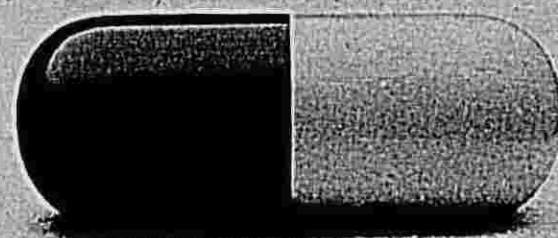
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If you have worked hard all your life and managed to put away a nest egg, you might end up losing most of your life savings because of a defect in Medicare.

If you or your spouse suddenly become ill and require extended nursing home care...NO ONE will help you with the nursing home bills. Medicare won't and neither will your health insurance. By law you are responsible for the nursing home bills yourself. Only after you have used up virtually all of your money, will Medicaid step in. That's because Medicaid, like Welfare, only aids the poor. By some estimates, the average couple's life savings can be wiped out after only 13 weeks of nursing home care.

Rich people don't have to worry because they can afford super-expensive special nursing home insurance, while the poor are taken care of by Medicaid.

Now that just doesn't seem fair to working people with a lifetime of hard-earned savings. The system they have supported with tax dollars, seems to have forgotten them. Savings intended to provide security in retirement, or help for children, can quickly go up in smoke.

The fact is, if you don't know how to protect your assets, here's what can happen to you. By law, before Medicaid will pay nursing home bills, you may have to spend all your countable assets except \$2000 (or as low as \$500 in some states). Countable assets mean not only money in checking and savings accounts...but also any funds in CD's, IRA's, Savings Bonds, Mutual Funds, Stocks, whole life insurance, annuities and other types of investments, as well as most trust assets.

They can also take a vacation home or a second car. In

addition, (except for a small personal spending allowance and a health insurance payment allowance) your entire Social Security or pension check can be taken to cover nursing home expenses. What's more, if you are single or widowed, you can even lose your house.

According to the federal law called the Spousal Impoverishment Act, if one spouse requires extended nursing home care, the healthy spouse can be forced to surrender HALF of their combined countable assets. And if you have a sizeable estate, they can legally take MORE THAN HALF.

Is there anything you can do to stop this nightmare from happening to you? Yes. You are protected by law and can use several legal techniques to place your countable (or vulnerable) assets into the uncountable (or protected) category. The problem is, most people are not aware of their legal rights. Unfortunately, most people think Medicare will take care of them, so they unknowingly leave their assets vulnerable and in jeopardy.

Your legal rights and the many methods of protecting your money are now revealed in "How to Protect Your Financial Security." This financial self-defense manual tells you simple legal procedures for preserving your money and warns of pitfalls to avoid. Here is some of the valuable material you learn:

- Legal ways to turn countable (or vulnerable) assets into uncountable (or protected) assets
- How to protect your house from being sold to pay your nursing home bills
- How to protect a second car or vacation home
- If you give your money to your children without

following these precise guidelines, a nursing home could get your money anyhow.

- What you need to know about Living Trusts
- What lawyers never tell you about protecting your will

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NOV. 19-
DEC. 9

Happenings

ILLINOIS

Christmas Market—Carlinville, Dec. 7-9. Get in the holiday spirit with arts & crafts, food specialties, trolley and carriage rides, carolers, visits with Santa Claus and entertainment on the town square. (217) 854-6663.

INDIANA

Christmas in Centerville—Centerville, Dec. 8. This family celebration features a display of Christmas toys from the 1860s, carriage rides, a lighted parade, home tours, carolers, musicians, crafts, Santa Claus and a soup supper. (765) 855-2241.

IOWA

International Children's Art Exhibit—Bedford, Dec. 5-23. View 200 pieces of artwork, created by children ages 3 to 14 from all over the world, at the Taylor County Historical Museum. (712) 427-0010.

KANSAS

Winter Wonderland Light Display—Augusta, Nov. 22-Dec. 31. Take the family on a 1-mile drive through Garvin Park and view more than 30 lighted and animated displays. (316) 775-6339.

MICHIGAN

Victorian Sleighbell Parade and Old Christmas Weekend—Manistee, Dec. 6-9. A parade featuring bells and horse-drawn sleighs, historic building tours, a special Christmas theatrical production, Festival of Trees, concerts and art exhibits highlight this event. (800) 288-2286.

MINNESOTA

Christmas in the Village—Montevideo, Dec. 1. View a late-1800s village decorated for the holidays, and enjoy sleigh rides, candy and bake sales, crafters, entertainment and a visit by Santa Claus. (320) 269-7636.

MISSOURI

Yuletide House Tour—Cuba, Dec. 2. Tour historic homes decorated for the season and visit the Crawford County History Museum during this benefit for Viva Cuba's community beautification projects. (877) 212-8429.

NEBRASKA

Christmas Cookie Walk—Grand Island, Dec. 2. Shop for and buy holiday cookies by the pound or by the platter during this benefit for Habitat for Humanity at St. Paul's Lutheran Church Family Life Center. (308) 385-5510.

NORTH DAKOTA

Holiday Dazzle on Main Parade—Jamestown, Nov. 23. Catch the holiday spirit during this parade of lighted floats down Main Street, and enjoy food from vendors along the route. (800) 222-4766.

OHIO

Candlelight Tour of Homes—Sandusky, Dec. 2-3. Tour six private homes decorated for the holidays, the Follett House Museum where refreshments are served, the Cooke House Museum where music is performed and a historic church. (419) 627-0640.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Parade of Lights and Chili Supper—Chamberlain, Nov. 23. Enjoy a parade of decorated, lighted floats followed by a chili supper and hot dog feed in the downtown area. (605) 234-4418.

WISCONSIN

Homespun Holidays—Markesan, Dec. 7-8. Victorian home tours, a parade, sleigh rides, a silent auction, a visit by Santa Claus, and food and craft sales highlight this event. (920) 398-8023.

Submit Happenings to: www.americanprofile.com/happenings or Happenings, 341 Cool Springs Blvd., Ste. 400, Franklin, TN 37067. Submissions must be received four months prior to the event.

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5. Mama's Applesauce Cake
6. Sleigh Ride
7. Follow That Star
8. That's What Christmas Means To Me
9. Intr To Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas
10. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas
11. Intro To Snowman Land
12. Snowman Land
13. 'Twas The Night Before Christmas
14. Little Drummer Boy
15. Home For The Holidays
16. Santa's Big Parade
17. Intro To All I Want For Christmas
18. All I Want For Christmas
19. Good Night (With Dialogue)

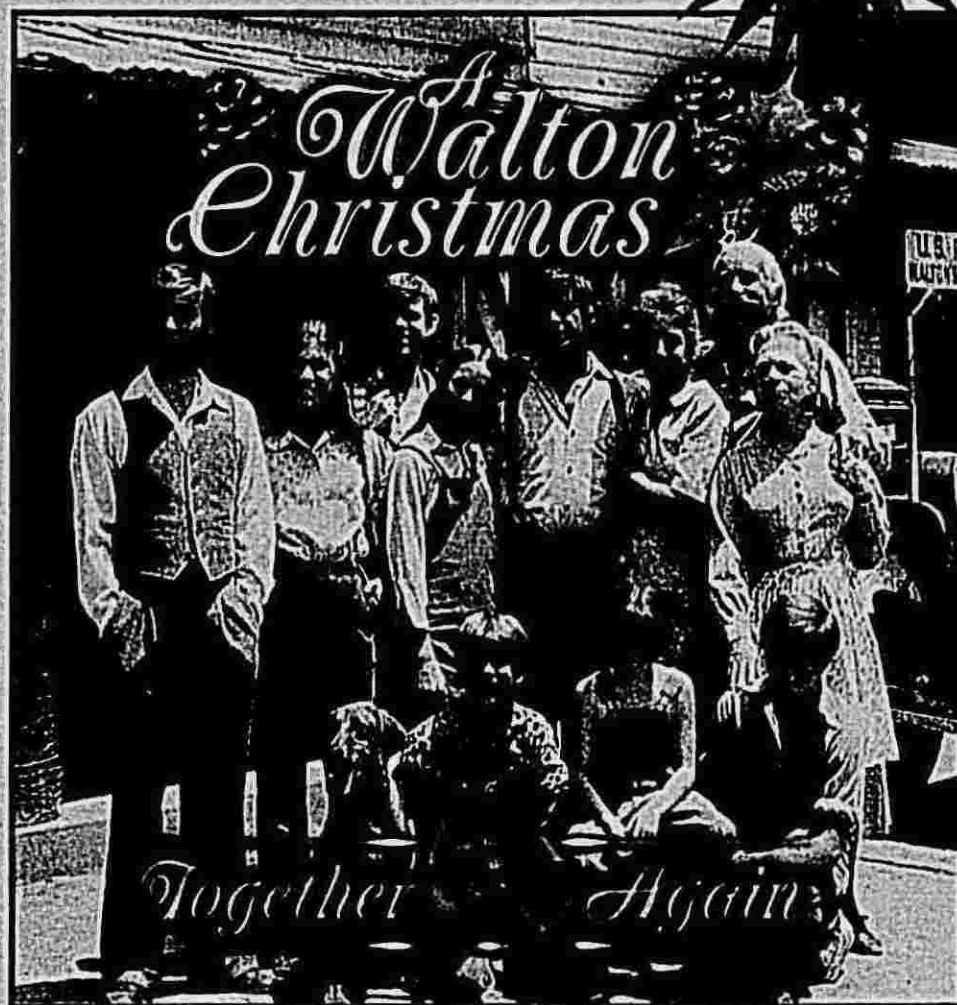
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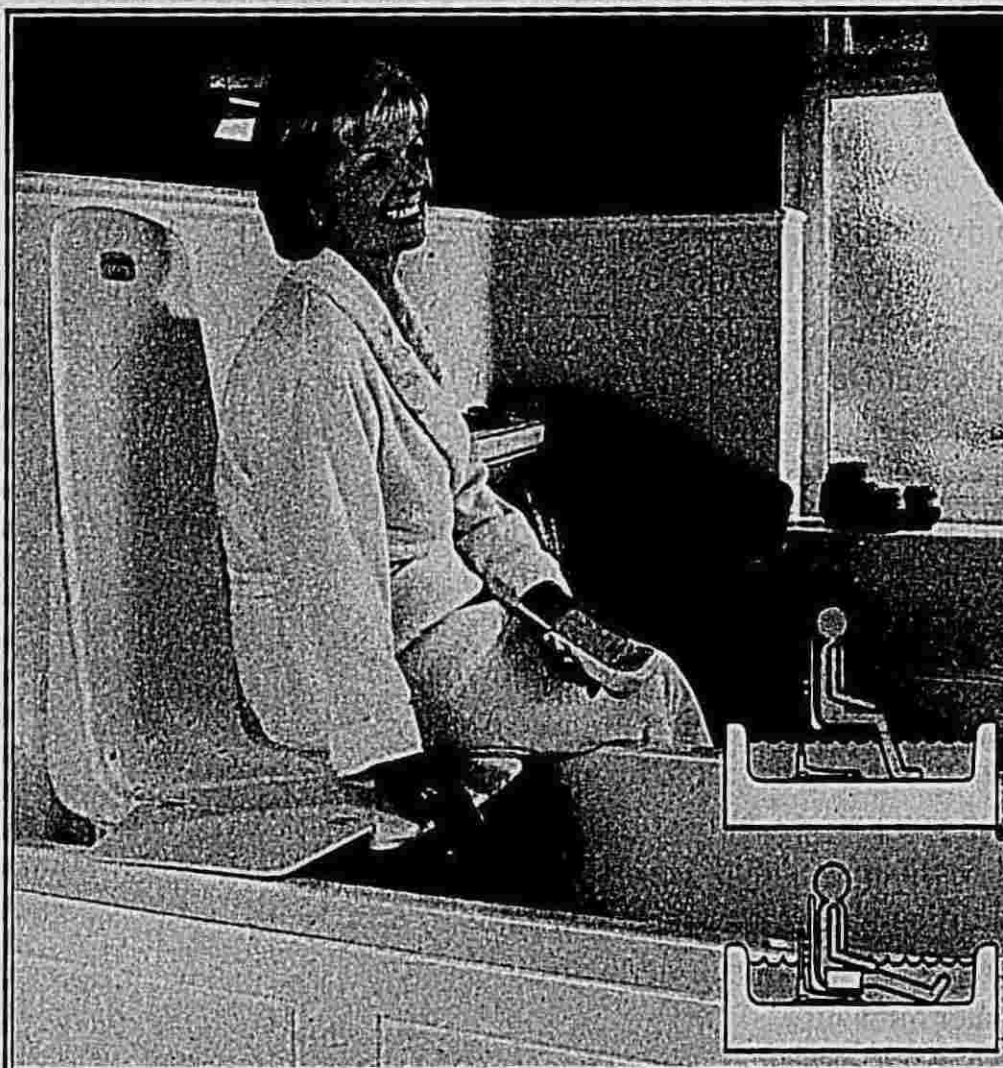
By John Fleming

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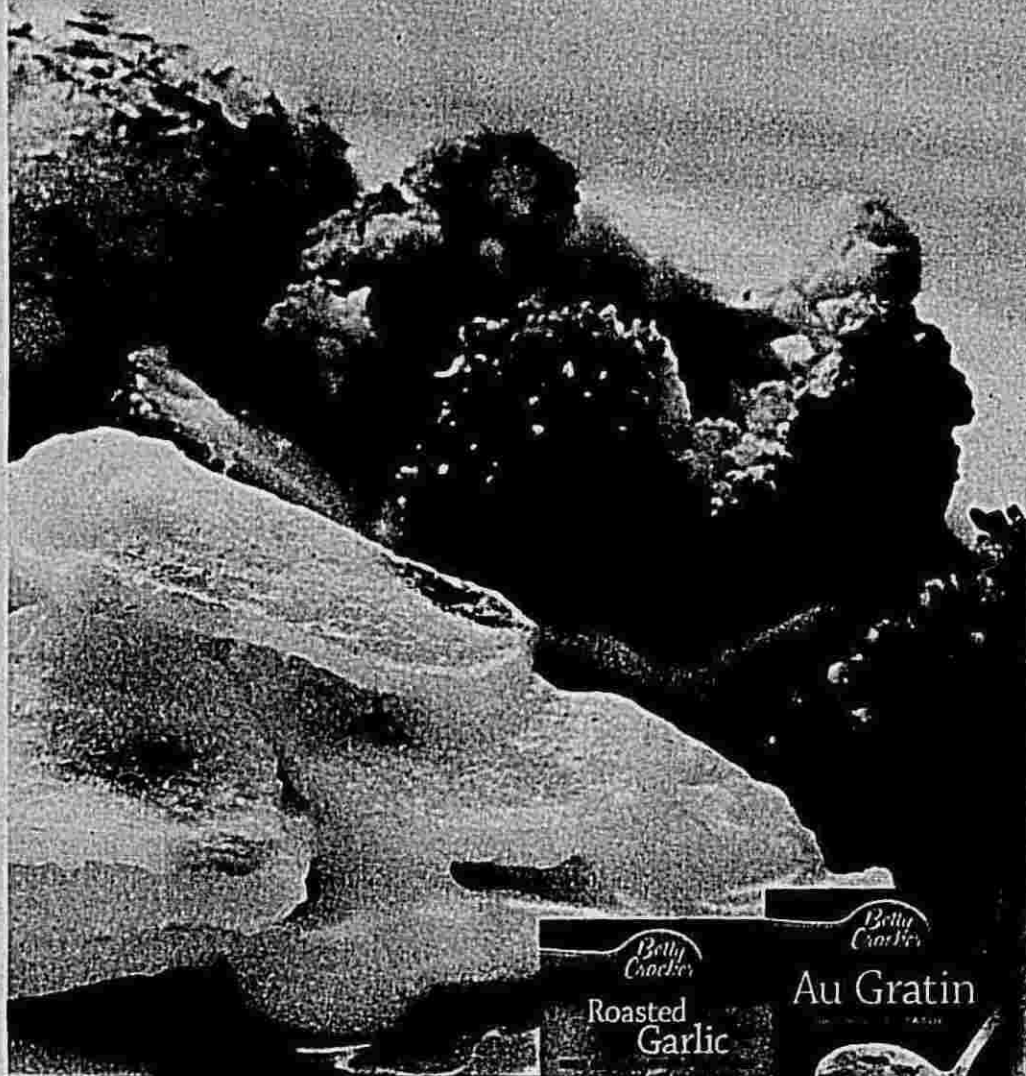
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Hometown Recipes



Photo: High Cotton
Food Styling & Photography

American Profile



Spiced Sweet Potato Soup

from SAM
McDANIEL

"I came up with this recipe after an autumn trip to the North Carolina state farmers' market where sweet potatoes were available for pennies a pound. The flavors are simple enough for every day, but it's also elegant enough to serve for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner." Perfect served with a fresh green salad and crusty bread. ☆

RECIPE: Spiced Sweet Potato Soup



Crème Fraiche:

- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup

Soup:

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 10 whole cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 4 cups chicken broth
- Salt
- Coarsely ground black pepper
- ¼ cup toasted walnuts

1. To prepare crème fraiche, whisk together sour cream, heavy cream and maple syrup. Let stand at room temperature.

2. To prepare soup, heat olive oil in a large pot; add onion. Sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add sweet potatoes, cinnamon sticks, cloves, nutmeg and broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 25 minutes. Remove cinnamon sticks and cloves; discard. Remove 1 cup of the cooking liquid and set aside.

3. Purée sweet potato mixture in a blender until very smooth. Add reserved liquid as needed to achieve desired consistency. Return to pan and cook until thoroughly heated. Season with salt and pepper.

4. Ladle into large soup bowls. Garnish with crème fraiche and walnuts. Serves 4 to 6.

Our Picks

by NEIL POND
Entertainment Editor

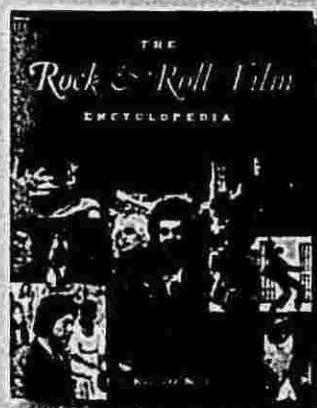
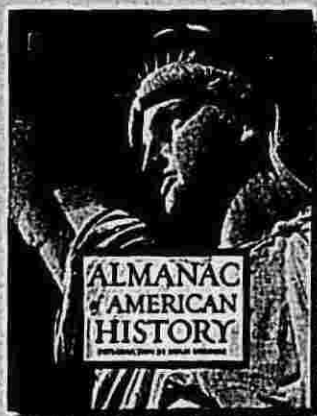
Christmas With The Chipmunks CD \$13.98

The evergreen antics of Alvin, Simon and Theodore get a newly remastered holiday re-release with these 24 Christmas tunes, including "Up On The House-Top," "Deck the Halls," "Jingle Bell Rock" and, of course, "The Christmas Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)"—both the 1958 original and an additional version on which the 'Munks are joined by '60s rock band Canned Heat. Yes, Canned Heat. Hey, in an audio world of harmonizing Chipmunks, anything can happen. Right, Alvin? Alvin? Al-VINNNNN!



National Geographic Almanac of American History by James Miller and John Thompson Softcover, 384 pages \$24

This fascinating, fact-filled exploration of our country's birth, growth and ongoing evolution starts 600 million years ago, when the North American continent first began to take geological shape, and journeys right to modern America's place in the 21st century. In between are the people, politics, wars, social movements, cultural shifts and other events that have made our nation what it is today, presented in a reader-friendly way and punctuated with hundreds of photos, illustrations, charts, maps and sidebars.



The Rock & Roll Film Encyclopedia by John Kenneth Muir Softcover, 358 pages \$19.95

From "juvenile delinquent" dramas of the 1950s through today's blockbusters, Hollywood has been fascinated with—and often fueled by—rock 'n' roll music. Pointing out the rockin' showbiz synergy behind *American Graffiti*, *Jesus Christ*

Superstar, *Grease*, *Footloose*, *Hairspray* and more than 225 other films spanning half a century, this is one totally rockin' A-to-Z reference book way too groovy to gather dust on a bookshelf.



Spider-Man 3 2-DVD set \$36.95

The third installment in Hollywood's web-slinging franchise is a wide-open shotgun blast of explosive effects, leering villains, bubbling subplots, galloping action and a cavalcade of stars, including Kirsten Dunst, Thomas Haden Church, Bryce Dallas Howard and Tobey McGuire, reprising his role as the rooftop-hopping superhero. As Spider-Man fights to save the city and the lives of those he loves, he's also struggling to wrest his own soul from a dark-side temptation that threatens to destroy him from within. A second disc provides commentary, and an inside look at the movie's spectacular stunts, bloopers and more.

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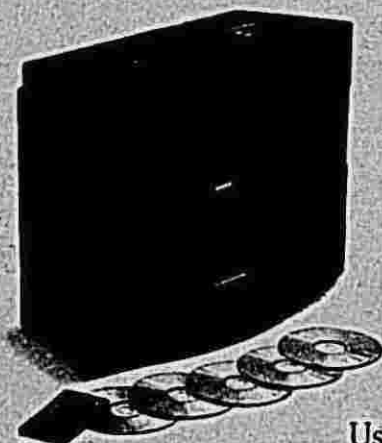
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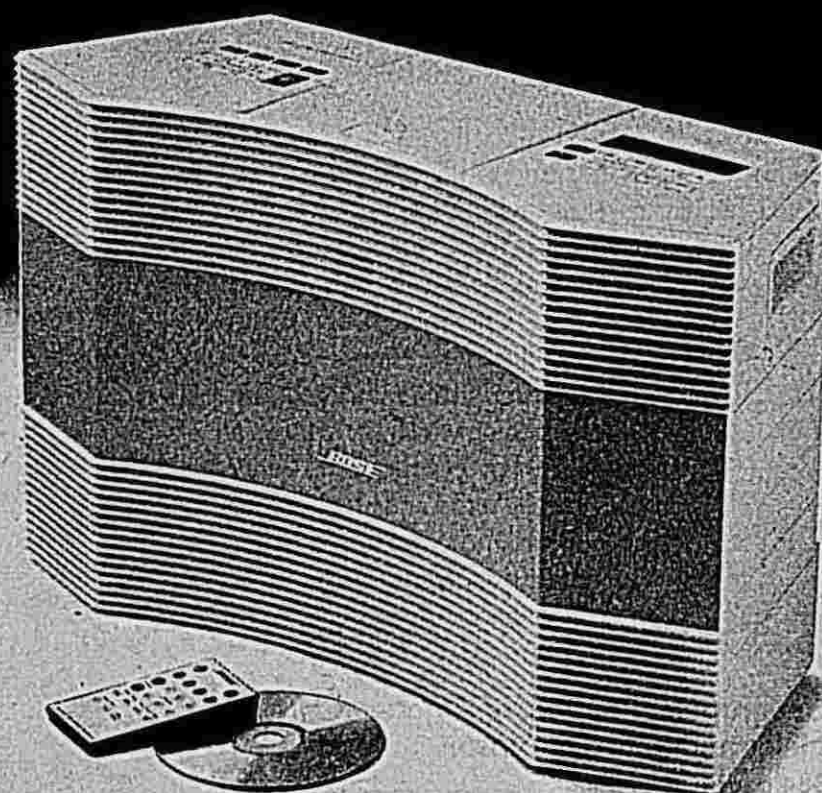
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